

Message Text

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70

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 0257

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XO, NZ

SUBJECT: IRRESPONSIBLE REPORTING ON DIEGO GARCIA

1. SUMMARY: WASHINGTON DATELINED STORY ALLEGES US/NZ
CONFRONTATION LOOMS OVER DIEGO GARCIA BUILDUP.
PRIME MINISTER ISSUES FLAT DENIAL. END
SUMMARY.

2. WASHINGTON-DALELINED STORY BY BRUCE KOHN, NZPA STAFF
CORRESPONDENT, HEADLINED QUOTE US-NZ CONFRONTATION LOOMS
WITH INDIAN OCEAN BUILD-UP PLANS END QUOTE APPEARED IN
WELLINGTON DAILY POST JANUARY 29. STORY DESCRIBES
ADMINISTRATION DRIVE TO WIN CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR
DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION AND THEN STATES QUOTE THE
PENTAGON'S PLANS SEEM LIKELY TO RUN FOUL OF THE NEW
ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE BOTH
EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO AN EXPANSION OF THE DIEGO
GARCIA BASE AND ANY BUILD-UP IN US MILITARY MIGHT IN
THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT IS UNDERSTOOD ALSO THAT
WELLINGTON HAS IN RECENT MONTHS BEEN STUDYING THE
PROSPECTS OF PROMOTING ITS DESIRE TO HAVE THE INDIAN
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OCEAN DECLARED A ZONE OF PEACE, FREE OF BIG POWER

MILITARY ACTIVITY. END QUOTE.

3. MFA OFFICIALS ARE UPSET BY THE STORY AND THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED.

BEGIN QUOTE: UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. "I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT SOURCES MR. KOHN HAS DRAWN UPON FOR HIS STORY", THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RIGHT HON. W. ROWLING SAID TODAY. "IT CERTAINLY HAS NO FOUNDATION IN ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT."

MR ROWLING WAS COMMENTING ON A REPORT FROM WASHINGTON BY NZPA CORRESPONDENT BRUCE KOHN, WHICH SUGGESTED THAT NEW ZEALAND AND THE UNITED STATES WERE HEADING FOR A CONFRONTATION ON PENTAGON PLANS TO ENLARGE THE MILITARY FACILITIES ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND OF DIEGO GARCIA. KOHN HAD ALSO REPORTED THAT NEW ZEALAND WAS CURRENTLY STUDYING WAYS OF HAVING THE INDIAN OCEAN DECLARED A ZONE OF PEACE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION HAD BEEN MADE PLAIN IN ITS STATEMENTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND ELSEWHERE, "WE HAVE SUPPORTED CONSISTENTLY THE CONCEPT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE, FREE FROM GREAT POWER RIVALRY AND TENSION," HE SAID. MR. ROWLING RECALLED THAT IN KEEPING WITH THIS POSITION, THE GOVERNMENT HAD INDICATED IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON 8 FEBRUARY 1974 THAT IT WOULD NOT WELCOME THE BUILD-UP OF ANY NATION'S MILITARY OR NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA. "OUR APPEALS FOR RESTRAINT HAVE BEEN EVEN-HANDED," HE OBSERVED. "THEY HAVE CLEARLY BEEN ADDRESSED TO BOTH GREAT-POWERS."

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NATURALLY CONCERNED TO PROMOTE ARRANGEMENTS THAT WILL SECURE PEACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, AS ELSEWHERE. IT WOULD GIVE ITS CONTINUED SUPPORT TO MEASURES DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE RESTRAINT ON THE PART OF THE GREAT POWERS.

THE ARTICLE WAS MISLEADING, HOWEVER, IN SUGGESTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTEMPLATING A SPECIFIC CONFIDENTIAL

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INITIATIVE IN RELATION TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA, AND THAT THIS MIGHT LEAD TO A CONFRONTATION. "WE HAVE BEEN CONCENTRATING OUR EFFORTS ON THE MEASURES NEEDED TO PROMOTE A SECURE, PEACEFUL AND NUCLEAR FREE AREA IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. AS I HAVE SAID, WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING MOVES BY OTHERS IN RELATION TO THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE INITIATIVES FOR SUCH MOVES WILL LIE MAINLY WITH THE COUNTRIES MOST CLOSELY INVOLVED."

4. IN A CHANCE MEETING OF POL COUNSELOR WITH JOHN ROBERTSON, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, AND LT. GENERAL SIR RICHARD WEBB, CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF, BOTH DISMISSED STORY AS IRRESPONSIBLE WITH NO BASIS IN FACT, AND YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE PROPENSITY FOR SOME REPORTERS ALWAYS TO LINK AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

5. AS A MATTER OF FACT, DIEGO GARCIA HAS BEEN PRETTY MUCH A NON-INTEREST ITEM IN NEW ZEALAND DUE TO ITS REMOTENESS FROM THIS COUNTRY. SUBJECT WAS NOT AN AGENDA ITEM AT FEBRUARY 1974 ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING IN WELLINGTON AND US DEL PERCEPTIONS ON DIEGO GARCIA EXPOUNDED DURING OVERVIEW OF SECURITY SITUATION IN AREA WERE UNCHALLENGED AT THAT TIME. AT RECENT ANZUS OFFICIALS MEETING IN WASHINGTON, RECORD INDICATES THAT GNZ DELEGATE CRAW STATED THAT GNZ CONCERN WAS THAT US MIGHT DO TOO LITTLE IN INDIAN OCEAN.

6 THE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT THE STORY WILL BE OF LITTLE CONCERN TO THE AVERAGE NEW ZEALANDER.
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